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A WAR OF LIBERATION

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
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OUR victory is certain; I declare it with the profoundest conviction, here in exile, and precisely when monarchical reaction appears most insolently secure. What matters the triumph of an hour? What matters it that by concentrating all your means of action, availing yourselves of every artifice, turning to your account those prejudices and jealousies of race which yet for a while endure, and spreading distrust, egotism and corruption, you have repulsed our forces and restored the former order of things? Can you restore men's faith in it, or think you can long maintain it by brute force alone, now that all faith in it is extinct? . . . Threatened and undermined on every side, can you hold all Europe for ever in a state of siege?

There can be few finer examples of courage and faith in politics than this prophecy of ultimate victory in the hour of overwhelming defeat. It was written by Mazzini * in 1849, the year which witnessed the collapse of the great attempt of 1848 to free the peoples of Europe from the network of mediæval despotism re-imposed on them by the settlement of 1814-15.

That attempt had seemed at the outset to have

* *Life and Writings of Mazzini,* vol. v, pp. 269-271.

achieved a most wonderful and complete success. From Paris revolution had run like an electric current through Italy, Austria and Germany. The Italians had united under the leadership of the constitutional king of Piedmont to drive the Austrians from Lombardy and Venetia. Throughout the congeries of German States reforms had been hastily conceded and their representatives had gathered at Frankfort to frame a constitution which would unite Germany on a basis of parliamentary government. Berlin itself had risen and even the Hohenzollern had bowed to the storm. Frederick William IV, yielding to both the democratic and the national movements, had granted a constitution and declared that Prussia would be absorbed in Germany—"Preussen geht in Deutschland auf." In Vienna, meanwhile, Metternich had fallen; the Liberals had assumed control of the government; and the scattered nationalities of the Austrian Empire had asserted the principle of autonomy. The Magyars had proclaimed the independence of Hungary; the Tchecks had declared for the reconstruction of the kingdom of Bohemia; and the Slovenes and Southern Slavs had demanded similar kingdoms of their own. It had even been suggested that the Germans of Austria should join in the proposed union of Germany and the Hapsburg realm be re-fashioned as a group of autonomous national states under the constitutional government of the Emperor.

And then the whole of this fabric of dreams so suddenly created had as suddenly collapsed. Long after the event Bismarck declared that even in the "March days" of 1848 the political position from his point of

view had never been "unfavourable," since the real "barometer" of the situation was not "the noise of parliaments great and small" but "the attitude of the troops"; * and his retrospect was accurate enough. Nationality is a weapon which, as the later history of Europe was repeatedly to prove, Despotism as well as Liberty can use; and by skilfully playing on the national antipathies of Slav and Magyar, German and Italian, the Austrian reactionaries succeeded in mastering by force of arms the centres of resistance to the re-establishment of the old régime. The Italians were driven from the Austrian provinces. Prague and Vienna were bombarded and reduced. And Kossuth and the Magyars were crushed with the assistance of an overwhelming Russian army. In Germany the issue was similarly decided. Obeying its war-lord without considering his cause (as Bismarck loved to boast †) the Prussian army suppressed the revolution in Berlin and helped to suppress it in Saxony and other German States. Finally, the democratic parliament at Frankfort, after wasting precious months in an academic debate on the rights of man, faded out of existence.

Thus 1849 had completely cancelled 1848. Absolutism, as Palmerston regretfully admitted, was once more in the ascendant; and even Mazzini's sanguine

* Bismarck's *Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. i, pp. 66, 67.

† In his speech in the Prussian Diet on December 3, 1850, Bismarck said: "As we are all aware, the Prussian people has risen unanimously at the summons of its King. It has risen full of confiding obedience; it has risen to fight, like its forefathers, the battles of the King of Prussia, before it knew—mark this well, gentlemen—before it knew what was to be fought for in these battles; that perhaps no one who joined the Landwehr knew."—*Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. i, p. 78.

spirit might have wavered if he could have foreseen how long that ascendancy would be maintained. Nearly seventy years were to pass before the hopes and passions of 1848 were once more set alight throughout Europe, before the vision of Europe as "one great emancipated land" came once more within the range of actuality. This time it was the forces of absolutism, not the forces of freedom, which brought the old issue to another open trial of strength; they themselves abandoned the passive "stage of siege" and delivered a direct assault; and they found their old opponents, not indeed as wary and well prepared as they should have been, but as strong as ever in faith and resolution. So the struggle which began as a war of domination became a war of liberation; and as a war of liberation it will end.

I. Absolutism in the Ascendant.

THE strength and durability of the reaction were mainly due to one man's work. The convulsion of 1848 found Bismarck just at the outset of his career; and the political faith which was to inspire it to the end was never more clearly stated than in the famous sentence of his speech in the Prussian Assembly on March 22, 1849:

> The strife of principles which during this year has shaken Europe to its foundations is one in which no compromise is possible. They rest on opposite bases. The one draws its law from what is called the will of the people, in truth, however, from the law of the strongest on the barricades. The other rests on authority created by God, on

authority by the grace of God. . . . The decision on these principles will not come by parliamentary debate, not by majorities of eleven votes; sooner or later the God who directs the battle will cast his iron dice.

It was with this simple creed of government by divine right bestowed by the God of Battles—or, in plain words, hereditary military despotism—that Bismarck confronted the task before him when, thirteen years later, he was appointed President of the Prussian Ministry. Thenceforward, till his retirement in 1890, he was mainly occupied with three great problems—the government of Prussia, the union of Germany, and the balance of power in Europe. It is worth noting, very briefly, how faithfully in his successive handling of these problems he observed that simple creed.

At the moment he took office the new spirit of democracy was still alive in Prussia. During the interval since 1849, when the King had "conceded" what is still the Prussian constitution, the Liberal majority in the Assembly had been striving to maintain at least a semblance of parliamentary government by asserting their claim to control expenditure. This claim William I was determined never to admit; and when in 1862 it seemed no longer possible to resist the force of public opinion, backed as it was by the sympathy of the Crown Prince, he drafted and even signed an act of abdication. But at the last moment he changed his mind, sent for Bismarck, and, on hearing that he was willing to undertake the government, tore up the act. Thus Bismarck started his long term of power with a definite mission to uphold the King against his people. The question, as he candidly explained to the

angry Opposition, was whether the House of Hohenzollern or the House of Parliament should rule in Prussia;* and at the very outset he told them—in words that echoed his earlier declaration of faith and were to prove still more historic—how it would be answered. "Not by speeches and majority votes are the great questions of the time decided—that was the great blunder of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron." The prophecy was characteristic of the man who in his early life had been described by his sovereign as "Red reactionary—smells of blood" † and in his old age was to be revered by his people as the "Iron Chancellor"; and it is one of the greatest misfortunes in history that he had the means and opportunity to make the prophecy come true. He at once sought to divert public attention from domestic to external issues, to Germany and beyond, where, as he said, men cared for Prussian power more than for Prussian liberalism; and when the Opposition refused to take his bait, he carried on the government with short sessions of Parliament and with no budget-laws at all. Meanwhile he

* In 1863 the Crown Prince Frederick submitted a memorandum on the constitutional question to his father, and in his reply King William made use of the comments which Bismarck wrote in the margin of the memorandum. One of these comments was as follows: "By the customary law of Prussia, which has not been materially altered by the Constitution, the King rules, not his ministers. It is only legislative, not governmental, functions that are shared with the Chambers, before which the King is represented by the ministers. It is thus still the law, just as before the Constitution, that the Ministers are his Majesty's servants and his chosen advisers, but not the rulers of the Prussian State. Even, therefore, by the Constitution the Prussian monarchy is not yet on a par with that of Belgium or England. Rather with us the King still rules personally."—*Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. i, p. 357.

† J. W. Headlam, *Life of Bismarck,* p. 51.

strengthened the army—with unauthorised expenditure—and bided his time. It soon came. In 1864 he made war on Denmark, in 1866 on Austria, in 1870 on France. By the intoxicating effect on public opinion of Prussia's triumphs in these wars, the "great question" was indeed decided. Democracy was henceforth dead in Prussia. There was no longer any serious conflict as to whether King or Parliament should rule; the exponents of liberalism were disillusioned and impotent, and worse than that, they became docile; the idea of an executive responsible to the representatives of the people was so completely shelved that many years later, when the progressive Crown Prince Frederick at last succeeded to the throne (1888), Bismarck was able to make it a condition of his retaining office that there should be "no parliamentary government." *

The same "blood and iron" which had welded the yoke of absolutism so firmly again about the neck of Prussia had also bound Germany together. The union was not that democratic fusion of the German peoples which the idealists of 1848 had dreamed of—a fusion which had required the "absorption" of Prussia in the greater whole. It was a federation of governments, mostly monarchies of a sort, and all adhering more or less closely to the "unconstitutional" Prussian type. That the architect of the Imperial constitution regarded his handiwork as a new and powerful buttress of reaction is frankly disclosed in the letters to King Lewis of Bavaria, which he published in his memoirs. Writing from Versailles at the end of 1870, a few weeks before King William I was proclaimed German

* *Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. ii, p. 330.

Emperor, he explains that the federal constitution is "conducive to Conservative and Monarchical interests" and "the surest guarantee against the dangers to which law and order might be exposed in the free movement of the political life of to-day." * And eight years later he tells King Lewis that "the growth of the Social-Democrat danger . . . renders obligatory on the German princes, on their governments, and on all supporters of order in the Empire, a solidarity of self-defence for which the demagogy of the orators and of the press will be no match." † In other words, the German Empire was created as a new "Holy Alliance" against popular liberty. And leading, controlling, dominating the alliance stood absolutist Prussia. For indeed there had been no question of her absorption; the constitution was so framed as to give only the shadow of power to the representatives of the German people in the Reichstag and all the substance of it to the Emperor, who coincided with the Prussian King, to the Chancellor, who coincided with the Prussian Chief-Minister, and to the Bundesrat or Council of the delegates of the State Governments, wherein the Prussian delegation possessed the controlling voice.‡ Thus Bismarck's academic interpreter could rightly give to united Germany a "hyphenated" title—*Preussen-Deutschland.* And Treitschke did not mince his words in explaining

* *Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. i, p. 386.

† *Ibid.,* vol. i, p. 397.

‡ Prussia has 17 of the 58 votes in the Bundesrat (Article 6). Amendments to the constitution are lost if 14 votes are cast in the negative (Article 78). If opinion is divided on questions relating to the army, the navy, the tariff, etc., the Prussian vote is decisive if cast in favour of no change (Articles 5 and 37). In the event of a tie the Prussian vote decides (Article 7).

what it meant. "In this German Empire," he declared in his Berlin lecture-room, "only one of the former States, namely Prussia, has preserved her sovereignty. . . . The conditions are such that the will of the Empire can in the last instance be nothing else than the will of the Prussian State." *

And in the field of foreign policy Bismarck worked with the same singleness of purpose, the same simple plan of consolidating the forces of reaction against democracy. "I look for Prussian honour," he had said in 1850, "in Prussia's abstinence from any shameful union with democracy"; † and twenty, thirty, forty years later he was true to his early creed. The absolutist powers were his natural allies, and he strove, as Metternich had striven, to keep the three great monarchies together. He first crushed and then conciliated Austria and bound her in a close alliance with Prussia-Germany. And if the pride of the governing clique in Austria suffered from the transference of the hegemony of reaction in Europe from Vienna to Berlin, the compact with Prussianism at least enabled it to preserve the traditions of the old régime. Bismarck commended the Austro-German alliance to the Austrian Government on exactly the same ground as he commended the Prussian union of Germany to the King of Bavaria. "The German Alliance," he said, "is the best calculated to secure for Austria a peaceful and conservative policy." ‡ And so for the next half century the police-tyranny which Metternich had organised retained its

* H. C. W. Davis, *The Political Thought of Heinrich von Treitschke,* pp. 104-106.
† *Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol i, p. 80.
‡ *Ibid.,* vol. ii, p. 271.

grip on Austrian life; and the corrupt administration at Vienna continued to poison politics by means of its spies and forgers and perjurers. All that Freedom gained from the Austrian defeat was the liberation of the Italian provinces. The Magyars, indeed, secured the autonomy of Hungary under the Hapsburg crown, but they only used it to trample on the national liberties of their Slav and Roumanian fellow-subjects. Henceforward the fate of the weaker nationalities of the Empire lay in the hands of a German-Magyar group at Vienna who continued to play the game of using one nationality against another and to maintain their own domination by the old rule of *divide et impera.* Thus not only Bismarck's absolutism but also his doctrine of national antagonism and ascendancy *—a doctrine he put ruthlessly into practice against the Poles, the Danes and the Alsatians of the German Empire—held sway across all Europe from the North Sea to the Danube.

As a complement to the Austrian alliance he negotiated a secret "reinsurance" treaty with Russia and exerted himself unceasingly to quiet her suspicions by strengthening the personal ties between Romanoff and Hohenzollern, by appealing to the common interests of the Russian and the Prussian Governments in the

* Bismarck's irreconcilable attitude to the Poles is candidly confessed in his *Reflections and Reminiscences.* Treitschke faithfully expounded his master's doctrine as "a great process of attrition"; *e.g.,* "Nothing is to be gained from barren talk about a right of nationality. Every state must have the right to merge into one the nationalities contained within itself."—*Political Thought,* p. 189. Similarly, Bülow: "There is no third course. In the struggle between nationalities one nation is the hammer and the other the anvil; one is the victor and the other the vanquished."—*Imperial Germany,* English translation of first edition, p. 240.

suppression of their Polish subjects, and even by suggesting that Austrian policy ought to "withdraw itself from the influence of Hungarian Chauvinism" and allow Russia to occupy Constantinople.* Meanwhile, to make assurance doubly sure, he took advantage of the isolation of united Italy to tempt her into partnership. It was the single exception to his rule against "union with democracy" and very characteristically he represented the alliance as primarily dynastic.

Towards the end of his memoirs Bismarck himself laid bare the whole basis of his foreign policy with his usual lucidity and candour.

> The dangers to which our union with Austria are exposed by tentatives towards a Russo-Austrian understanding, . . . may, as far as possible, be minimised by keeping the strictest possible faith with Austria, and at the same time taking care that the road from Berlin to St. Petersburg is not closed. Our principal concern is to keep the peace between our two imperial neighbours. We shall be able to assure the future of the fourth great dynasty in Italy in proportion as we succeed in maintaining the unity of the three empire states, and in either bridling the ambition of our two neighbours on the east or satisfying it by an *entente cordiale* with both. Both are for us indispensable elements in the European political equilibrium; the lack of either would be our peril—but the maintenance of monarchical government in Vienna and St. Petersburg, and in Rome as dependent upon Vienna and St. Petersburg, is for us in Germany a problem which coincides with the maintenance of our own state régime.†

The maintenance of our own state régime, the preservation of the Hohenzollern autocracy and the military

* *Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. ii, pp. 285, 286.
† *Ibid,* vol. ii, pp. 271, 272.

caste it rests on—to that end the most powerful statesman of nineteenth-century Europe devoted his life; to that end he paralysed liberalism and perverted nationalism in Germany, and held liberty at bay in Europe for half a century.

II. The Nemesis of Despotism.

BISMARCK was well satisfied with his work; but its very success was to lead to its undoing. When he declared that Germany was now a "satiated" power, he forgot that by its nature military despotism is insatiable. From the days of the ancient Empires of the East to the reign of Napoleon history has proved again and again that the desire for power, if it be unchecked by the sense of responsibility, is one of the most implacable of human lusts. No sooner was Napoleon master of France than he strove to be master of Europe; no sooner had he mastered Europe than he dreamed of mastering the world. And so with the Prussian monarchy. The domination of Germany and the hegemony of Central Europe—from these achievements the craving for yet more power was bound to conjure up visions of wider conquests. Inevitably, too, the weapons Bismarck had used, the arguments he had relied on, to widen the range of Prussian power were employed for carrying the process beyond the limits he had set to it. When William I had hesitated to steal Holstein for the purpose of strengthening Prussia's maritime position, Bismarck had recalled the conquering tradition of the Hohenzollerns and reminded him "that every

one of his immediate ancestors . . . had won an increment of territory for the state." * What was to prevent the same insidious appeal to a mediæval dynastic pride from stirring the heart of William II? Bismarck, again, had declared in 1850 that Prussia could not "allow anything to happen in Germany without her consent": † and fifty years later almost as a matter of course, came the Kaiser's modern version of that doctrine—"Neither on the ocean nor across it can any great decision be again arrived at without Germany and the German Emperor." ‡

Nor is it only the lust for power that makes absolutism a danger to the world. Absolutism is doomed to be aggressive. For ever engaged in a war with the future, perpetually "threatened and undermined" by the forces of progress, it must for its very preservation be always sharpening its weapons, and from time to time for the same reasons it is compelled to use them. The Kaiser, like every autocrat before him, was bound to foster the military pride of the army on which his power rested; bound, too, in the end, to glut its leaders' appetite for fighting. Like every autocrat, he was bound to use all means for bringing the minds as well as the arms of his people under his sway; to teach them the doctrine of a superhuman State unfettered by morality or law; and to tempt them back across the ages to the barbaric cult of Thor and Odin. And at the last, when despite his utmost efforts the rising tide of Social Democracy began to wash the footsteps of his throne, he was driven to adapt for his immediate needs the policy

* *Reflections and Reminiscences,* vol. ii, p. 9.
† *Ibid.,* vol. i, p. 80.
‡ Speech of July 3, 1900.

which had served Bismarck so well—to divert attention from domestic to external problems, to eclipse the hope of liberty at home with the glamour of ascendancy abroad, and then, when antagonism was inevitably provoked thereby, to spread the legend of "encirclement," to raise the old cry of "danger to the Fatherland," and finally to set the world at war on the plea of self-defence. All this was inevitable under the circumstances if military despotism was to endure in Germany. It *was* a war of self-defence—not, however, for the German people, but, in a sense, against them. If the Emperor and his generals could repeat on a larger scale the triumphs of 1864 to 1870, then the clock could be set back again; the ideas of their "enemies" the Social Democrats and of all the exponents of popular liberty and parliamentary government would be once more discredited and forgotten; and militarism and autocracy would be riveted still more firmly and lastingly about the German people.

So elaborate were their preparations, so immense their military strength, and so great the aggressor's advantage in choosing his own moment for the war, that the exponents of Prussianism may well have thought it not very difficult to win their game a second time. They could not fail to realise indeed that the obstacles to their success were more formidable than before. In attempting to make Prussia dominant in Germany they had only had to reckon with the hostility of two first-rank Powers, and Bismarck had managed to keep Austria and France apart and crush them separately. But in attempting to make Prussian Germany dominant in Europe they had to face more numerous op-

ponents, and, as it turned out, to fight them all together. The first of these was France—a France which had risen undaunted from the ashes of 1870, with clearer eyes, a steadier heart and a body politic more closely knit together; a France, moreover, with whom Prussianism in the ascendant could never come to terms. For nowhere was the conflict of ideals more obvious or more inexorable. Napoleonism had gone down for ever in the red sunset of Sedan: France had made her final choice for liberty, and become once more, as in 1789 and 1830 and 1848, its ringleader in Europe. There could be no harmony whatever between her conception of Europe as a company of free States with equal rights and the Prussian conception of a single dominant State, overriding the rights of all its neighbours, dictating their policy, holding over them a perpetual threat of war.

And the working-out of the new scheme of aggrandisement had necessarily upset the equilibrium so carefully maintained by Bismarck and ranked Russia beside France. "Hungarian Chauvinism" was positively encouraged at Vienna in order that the Hapsburg Empire might establish a German-Magyar ascendancy in the Balkans and so open the road for Prussian dominion to Constantinople and beyond it to the gates of Africa and India. And this, of course, was an open challenge to Russia's traditional claims as the friend and liberator of the Balkan Slavs. So Russia withdrew from the *entente* of the three Emperors and entered on the Dual Alliance with the French Republic.

One more dislocation of Bismarck's diplomatic system was also unavoidable. Unnatural from the outset,

the alliance of free Italy with Central European absolutism could scarcely be expected to stand the strain of a deliberate policy of German expansion. For Italy, despite Bismarck's pretensions, was a democratic, not a dynastic State; and the Italian people could never join hands with the Hohenzollern and the Hapsburg in an attack on democracy in Western Europe.

And what of England? William II and his advisers were prepared to face France and Russia: they doubtless relied on securing at the worst the neutrality of Italy: but did they also discount England? Bismarck had discounted her; and events, it seemed, had justified him. Since then, indeed, the development of Prussian ambitions had stirred her from her isolation and brought her to a seemingly half-hearted and uneasy "understanding" with France and Russia. But since then, also, Treitschke's reading of English history as one long sordid record of selfishness and duplicity had sunk deep into the German mind. Might not this second Carthage, drowsing over her money-bags, her ancient warrior spirit long since sapped away by luxury, be easily cajoled or bribed or even intimidated into breaking the frail threads of honour—as soon as their maintenance intact should clearly come to mean the sacrifice of English wealth and English lives?

It must have been somewhat on these lines that Prussian statesmen and soldiers calculated the prospects of their scheme. With increasing emphasis the course of the war has shown how narrow was their outlook and how fatally it misled them. It is the nemesis of despotism not only that it must always be striving to enlarge its power, but also that it should fail to estimate aright

the strength of the antagonism its efforts must arouse, till sooner or later it overreaches itself and meets its fate. Schooled in the creed of blood and iron it misjudges the forces of the spirit. It cannot understand the free man's moral hatred of slavery. It thinks that all men measure life by its own material standards; that democracy has no aim or meaning beyond the appeasement of the mob; that justice and good faith in international relations are the catchwords of conscious hypocrisy; that no one in his heart denies that might is right. And so the Prussian autocrat and his advisers wholly failed to foresee that their long-planned *coup* and the manner of its execution would outrage the moral sense of all free and enlightened men, reveal again to a younger generation the half-forgotten evils inherent in autocracy, and force the world to recognise the war as one more trial of the oldest and greatest moral issue in politics, the issue between tyranny and freedom.

They may still be undeceived. They may still think that the democracies of Europe are influenced by material interests alone; that millions of free Englishmen, for instance, are fighting now because they are afraid of German power or covetous of German trade. But must they not confess that they have raised against themselves a stronger passion than fear or greed when they look to-day at Russia or turn from the Old World to the New? How can they account in the terms of their crude materialism for the part the British Dominions have played in the war, for the actions and the declared intentions of the United States, or for the Russian Revolution?

III. The Dedication of the New World.

IF proof were needed that absolutism is a relic of the past—a garment outgrown by the moral stature of humanity and doomed in the end to be discarded by all civilised men—it would be found most manifestly in the political character of the New World. To these peoples with their almost immeasurable possibilities of growth it will one day fall to play a greater part than the peoples of Europe in moulding the destiny of mankind; and nowhere among them is there now or can there ever be a place or a hope for absolutism. To them as to us its doctrines are revolting, its pretensions ludicrous, its prestige among the peoples it still dupes and victimises almost inexplicable. To the principles of self-government, on the other hand, they have consecrated their political life. Within their boundaries —in North and South America, in Australasia, in South Africa—democracy in various forms is universal: they regard it as their natural and inalienable heritage and the substitution of any other type of government as well-nigh inconceivable. This allegiance of the New World to a single political creed is one of the most significant facts in modern history; but the counsellors of Prussianism failed to appreciate its force or discern its bearing on their plans of conquest. They regarded the New World as too remote from Europe, too ignorant of its affairs, above all, too much absorbed in its own material development, to allow itself to be seriously entangled in a European war. In no immediate danger, with little or nothing to gain and much

to lose, why should those distant nations abandon their habitual dreams of peace and exchange prosperity and ease for sacrifice and bloodshed?

The answer was quickly given by the British Dominions. Legally they were at war as soon as the United Kingdom, but there was no law to determine the part they were to take in it. They were free to choose whether they should remain passively on the defensive or make a half-hearted show of co-operation with the mother-country or throw themselves into the struggle with all their soul and strength. That they chose the last of these and chose it on the instant was primarily due to their prompt recognition of the issues at stake. At the emergency session of the Canadian Parliament, summoned on the outbreak of the war, Sir Robert Borden declared that Canada would fight "to uphold the principles of liberty, to withstand forces that would convert the world into an armed camp." * And the universal response to this appeal for the defence of freedom against militarism, not only in the Dominions but in India also, revealed, as never before, that the unity of the British Commonwealth is above all a moral unity, its binding force a common love of liberty and justice, transcending the ties of sentiment and kinship, surmounting the barriers of race and nationality, linking the West to the East. "This war," says the French Canadian veteran, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, "is a contest between German institutions and British institutions. British institutions mean freedom. German institutions mean despotism. That is why we

* The Round Table, December, 1914, p. 182.

Canadians have such a vital interest in this war." * The oversea peoples of the British Commonwealth, says the Dutch South African soldier and statesman, General Smuts, came forward "solely as free men," because they "felt that the cause of liberty was endangered" and because "our whole ideal was to be free, and to build up new countries . . . without the terror of militarism always overshadowing us." † And the Maharajah of Bikanir describes the enthusiasm of India for the war, her ready sacrifice of life and treasure, as "India's rally to the British flag of freedom." ‡

Sooner or later the answer of the British Commonwealth to the Prussian challenge to democracy was bound to be echoed by the greatest of all the New World peoples. The American Republic was dedicated to democracy at its birth. It came into existence because British citizens in the thirteen American colonies insisted on their right to enjoy an equal measure of self-government with British citizens in the mother-country and refused, therefore, to pay taxes, even for the maintenance of their own defence, levied by a parliament in which they were not represented. "Governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed"—that was the claim which, like their forefathers in England a century before, they asserted and made good by war and revolution; and from that day to this those famous key-words of the Declaration of Independence have stood written on the hearts of the American people as the golden rule of politics. Now, absolutism is

* The Round Table, December, 1915, p. 144.
† Speech at the Guildhall, May 1, 1917.
‡ *Times*, May 10, 1917.

the direct negation of that rule; and, as soon as they recognised that absolutism was up in arms in Europe to extend its dominion among men, the American people were bound to meet the challenge and vindicate their faith.

Those Americans who were better versed in the diplomatic history of Europe discerned the true nature of the issue at the outset of the war; and President Wilson, an historian himself, however ambiguous at times his official declarations may have been, must have possessed from the first as full a knowledge and as clear an insight as any of his countrymen. The allied democracies of Europe were assured, therefore, of a quick and cordial sympathy from many Americans and of at least a benevolent neutrality from the Government. But it could be no more than neutrality until the great majority of the American people shared in the President's knowledge and insight; and, deep as was the ignorance of European affairs among the mass of the British people in 1914, it was still more profound among the mass of Americans, thousands of miles away from Europe. The enlightenment of this vast body of opinion was slow, but it was sure. The truth would out. Prussianism at war inevitably unmasked itself; it boasted of its strength and its projects of dominion; it displayed, on a wider scale and in a more terrible and indiscriminate fashion than the world had yet seen, the evils that flow from irresponsible power. And so the American people, like their British kinsmen, were awakened to the facts; more than that, they were forced, as we were, to forsake a tradition of isolation

from Europe and indifference to its destiny that was older and stronger than ours.

The entrance of the United States into the war is described in another article in this issue. We are only concerned here to point out how it emphasises anew the real character of the conflict; and nowhere has it been more clearly and frankly stated than in the speech in which President Wilson asked Congress to declare the United States to be at war with Germany. At last the fetters of official neutrality were broken and he was free to speak his mind.

> Our object (he said) is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish autocratic power, and to set up amongst really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and action as will henceforth ensure the observance of these principles. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organised force which is controlled wholly by their will and not by the will of their people.

The war, he went on, was not made with the "previous knowledge or approval" of the German people.

> It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in the old unhappy days, when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers and wars were provoked and waged in the interests of dynasties or little groups of ambitious men, who were accustomed to use their fellowmen as pawns and tools.

In Prussian autocracy, plotting war in this antiquated fashion and preparing for it and aiding it with

wholesale spying and intrigue, the President solemnly declared that the United States could "never have a friend": and he summed up in one sentence the final reason why the American people were accepting "the gage of battle" with "this natural foe to liberty," and would "if necessary spend the whole force of the nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its power"—"*The world must be safe for democracy.*"

To such a task we can dedicate our lives, our fortunes, everything we are, everything we have, with the pride of those who know the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and might for the principles that gave her birth.

The spirit of this great speech is true to the noblest of all American traditions. The founders of the American Commonwealth believed that in preserving liberty in America they were working for the future of mankind; and Lincoln once affirmed that to him the most inspiring idea in the Declaration of Independence was "the sentiment which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but I hope to the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men." *

Among all the wrong and injury which the Prussian authors of this war have brought upon humanity, they have done it the signal service of breaking through the crust of indifference and aloofness which had hitherto kept the American people from playing their part in keeping the world safe for democracy, and of ranking

* Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 183.

them beside the British peoples oversea to defend in far-off Europe the faith they hold in common. It was a British statesman who, after a short and bloodless conflict with the absolutist Powers of Europe nearly a century ago, declared that he had "called a New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old." A similar fate has now befallen them and this time they have brought it on themselves.

IV. Revolution in Russia.

SHORTLY before President Wilson thus defined the issues of the war they had been defined in the same terms and with even more startling significance by events in Europe. In the course of three days, between March 13 and 15, the Russian autocracy was overthrown, and the largest State in Europe and the third largest in the world became a democracy.

Not many years ago Russia was politically the most backward of the European Powers. It was only in 1861 that the Russian peasantry were emancipated by the Czar's *ukase* from serfdom. But at heart the Russian people, despite or rather because of their simplicity, were freer than the German people. The democratic spirit was alive in the personal fellowship and social equality of their village-life, and there was no all-pervading State machine of education devised to drill them, as the Germans were drilled, into unquestioning docility. Thus, while absolutism grew stronger in Germany, it grew weaker in Russia. Under the régime of Bismarck, Berlin, not Petrograd, was its true

metropolis. But Bismarck had striven (as has been seen) to keep the Russian and Prussian autocracies together. For the ultimate maintenance of absolutism in Europe he desired them to strengthen and support each other; and he used his influence at the Russian Court to fortify Czardom and to imbue with his own ruthless Prussian spirit the bureaucracy, largely German in its personnel, through which Czardom worked its will. The change of orientation in German foreign policy reversed the situation. Russia soon found herself forced into another diplomatic camp; and the new alliance with France, the new friendship with Britain, inevitably strengthened the forces of Russian liberalism. It is noteworthy that the secession of Russian foreign policy from the absolutist group coincided with a vigorous effort on the part of the Russian reformers to obtain some measure of popular government, with the winning of the right to free speech and a free press, the creation of the first Russian Parliament and the growth of an industrial democracy. But Prussianism still kept its hold on the Court and the bureaucracy. As his treatment of the Duma showed, the Romanoff was no readier than the Hohenzollern to share his power with the people.

Before the war, then, there was a latent contradiction between the domestic and the foreign policy of the Russian autocracy; and it was necessarily clarified and emphasised by the war itself. The more evident it became that the war was in reality a conflict of political ideals, the more unnatural seemed the position of an absolutist State among the allied democracies of Europe. Neutrals, and especially Americans, whose

country had been in the past the special refuge of Russian fugitives from tyranny, could not but see in it a very solid obstacle to a whole-hearted sympathy with the Allies' cause: and Russian intellectuals and progressives could not but feel that, as long as Czardom prevailed, the cause which Russia fought for could not be quite the same as the cause which France and Britain, Italy and Belgium, fought for; that she could not fully share in their purpose or their victory. And when it became evident that the natural instincts on which the Holy Alliance and Bismarck's league of autocrats had once been founded were again asserting themselves in the *entourage* of the Czar, when it was discovered that certain of his ministers had even contemplated a treacherous bargain with the German Government, the Russian people rose, and, the army being with them, achieved the most sudden and sweeping revolution in history.

There were many, before the war, who believed that such a triumph for liberty in Russia was beyond the bounds of possibility, at any rate for years to come. It is the direct outcome of the war, the first great achievement of those immeasurable forces which Prussian absolutism was fated to raise against itself and all its kind. If the war should end to-day absolutism would have already suffered a disastrous blow. Of its four historic citadels in Europe only Berlin, Vienna, and Constantinople would remain in its hands.

The revolution (said Mr. Lloyd George in his message to Prince Lvoff, the new Russian Prime Minister) whereby the Russian people have based their destinies on the sure foundation of freedom is the greatest service which they

have yet made to the cause for which the Allied peoples have been fighting since August, 1914. . . . It shows that, through the war, the principle of liberty, which is the only sure safeguard of peace in the world, has already won one resounding victory.

In these words of welcome to the new-born Russian Commonwealth, Mr. Lloyd George was speaking from the heart of the British people; but, profound and spontaneous as it was, our satisfaction was tinged with anxiety. The consolidation of democracy in Russia is in any case a colossal task and its difficulty is immeasurably heightened by the strain of war. The situation is still too obscure for any outside critic to pass judgment on it. But this much at least is clear. Until an assembly can be created with direct authority to express the will of the Russian people as to the future constitution, government must be carried on by mutual agreement between the leaders of the revolution And during this *interregnum* there can be no security against the forces of disorder within or the forces of despotism without unless that agreement is cordial and effective and expresses itself in the maintenance of a single supreme executive with undisputed authority both in internal affairs and in the conduct of the war. For some weeks such unity seemed unattainable. A Provisional Government was established at the outset of the Revolution, but from the first it did not stand alone. Another body, the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates, representing the Socialist parties, not only formulated a national policy of its own both in foreign and in domestic affairs, but assumed executive power and issued orders to the people

and the armies concurrently with the orders of the Government. Such a "dyarchy" was bound to compromise the prospects of order and good government. Economic reorganisation and the maintenance of military discipline were equally impracticable as long as citizens and soldiers were called on to serve two masters; and the hands of the Government were also tied and weakened in its efforts to maintain unity of purpose and action with the Allies. How serious the situation became was frankly expressed by M. Kerensky, Minister of Justice and the single Socialist representative in the Provisional Government, in the eloquent appeal he addressed on May 13 to a conference of delegates from the armies at the front.*

I no longer feel my former courage (he said), I am no longer sure the Russian people are not rebellious slaves but responsible citizens worthy of the Russian nation. . . . If the tragedy and desperateness of the situation are not realised by all, if our State organism does not work like a machine, then all our dreams of liberty, all our ideals, will be thrown back decades and may be will be drowned in blood. . . . We have tasted freedom and are becoming intoxicated. But we need now the greatest possible sobriety and discipline. History must be able to say of us, "They died, but were never slaves."

Anxiety was deepened by the news of the resignation of M. Gutchkoff, Minister of War, and the report that General Brusiloff and General Gurko had asked to be relieved of their commands. But just at this darkest moment the sky seemed suddenly to brighten. On May 15 the proposal that a Coalition Government should be

* Reported in *Daily Chronicle*, May 15, 1917.

formed was accepted by the Executive Committee of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates and on the following day this decision was endorsed at a plenary meeting of the Council. A definite "statement of agreement" embodying the principle of a single supreme authority having been drawn up and signed, a new Cabinet was promptly constructed containing six Socialists with M. Kerensky as Minister of War. The most authoritative comment on the prospects of the new régime may be found in the statement made by Prince Lvoff, who remained Prime Minister, to a representative of the American press.

The most serious crisis in Russia's modern history has been satisfactorily settled, and conditions already show marked symptoms of improvement. It is my impression that the new Coalition Cabinet will receive the support of all reasonable Russian citizens. . . . Most of the difficulties of my first revolutionary Cabinet arose from the fact that in all questions I and my colleagues were obliged to rely solely upon moral persuasion. There was no actual governmental power with material force, such as you have in America and in the world's other democratic countries. . . . This force could only be obtained if representatives of the Socialist and allied Left parties entered the Government and agreed to support it unshrinkingly in a policy of combined freedom and order. If this solution had proved unreachable we were threatened with general anarchy, followed by national disillusion with the revolution and with a reactionary counter-revoluntionary movement as the final stage. This, the normal course of unsuccessful revolution, has, I hope, been avoided as a result of agreement between the temporary Government and the Council of Delegates. The Council has undertaken to support the Government against anarchy and disorder, and further to work for restoring discipline to the army, naturally on the condition,

which we granted, that the army should be democratised. . . . In future Russia is democratic, and must not only enjoy freedom, but must take on herself the responsibility of defending freedom. . . . During the negotiations which have led to the settlement, representatives of the Council of Delegates showed that they thoroughly understood the dangers threatening Russia and were determined to do everything possible to save the country from anarchy, defeat, and dissolution.

All the world's democracies will pray for the success of the new régime, for Russia's sake and also for their own. For it is not in Russia only that the triumph of liberty is imperilled. The cause of free Russia is indissolubly linked with the cause of her allies. If her strength is sapped and dissipated by dissension and disorder, so much the harder and the longer will be the task of all the other free peoples of the world in breaking the power of Prussianism. But amid all her troubles free Russia can never come to terms with absolutism. She can no more make peace with the Kaiser than she can restore the Czar. The German Government is now straining every nerve to repair the injury its cause has suffered from the Revolution by patching up a peace. In his eagerly awaited statement to the Reichstag on May 15 the Chancellor had not a word to say of the ambitions he still cherishes in the West or in the Balkans, or of the possibility of negotiation with the Western Allies. "In a debate on war aims," he said, "the only guiding line for me is an early and satisfactory conclusion of the war." But to Russia he held out the olive branch. "I do not doubt that an agreement aiming exclusively at a mutual understanding could be obtained which would exclude every

thought of oppression and leave behind no sting of discord."

The Russian people will not be deceived. Their peasant soldiers may not be quick to recognise the needs of the domestic situation; they may be puzzled for the moment by the conflict of authority and diversity of interests which cloud the early days of every revolution; but on one point there can be no doubt or confusion in their minds. They know that the German Government is the Kaiser's Government; that the Kaiser's power in Germany is as the Czar's power was in Russia; and that, till Germany also achieves her revolution, she must always be the implacable enemy of Russia's newborn freedom. The answer they will give to Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg's offer was foreshadowed in the manifesto which the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates issued on the day before he spoke.

The regiments of William (it declared) are destroying Revolutionary Russia. Do not forget, soldiers and comrades (it continued), that peace cannot be achieved if you do not check the enemy's pressure at the front, if your ranks are pierced, and if the Russian Revolution, like an inanimate body, lies at the feet of William. You who are in the trenches, do not forget that you are defending the liberty of the Russian Revolution and of your brother workmen and peasants. . . . The German Army is not a revolutionary army. It still blindly follows William and Charles, emperors and capitalists. . . . Peace will not be obtained by separate treaties, nor by the fraternisation of isolated regiments and battalions. This way will only lead you to the loss of the Russian Revolution, the safety of which does not lie in peace or in a separate armistice.

Such was the attitude of the Council before its concordat with the Provisional Government, and it was clearly expressed in the "statement of agreement," which declared that "the defeat of Russia and her allies would be the cause of the greatest national disaster" and asserted the principle of the unity of all the allied fronts.

V. "Reform" in Prussia.

THERE is one last card the German Government can play. It can deny the reality of the gulf which now divides the great Slav and Teuton States more sharply than ever did their difference of race. It can admit that events in Petrograd have inevitably reacted in Berlin: that the revolutionary spirit is so contagious that even its own docile people have been in some degree infected with it. And having confessed those disagreeable truths, it can go on to make a virtue of necessity, to declare its intention to satisfy its people's needs, and to exhibit as proof thereof its programme of domestic reform. But before democrats in any country allow themselves to be disarmed by the belief that absolutism in Prussia has been converted by its enemies and has already contemplated suicide to make way for a system more amenable to them, they will do well to consider exactly how far the Kaiser and his ministers have been driven by necessity and exactly what measure of virtue they can claim to have displayed.

On March 29 the Chancellor confessed in the Reichstag that "before the war the interests of the labour-

ing classes were placed in an apparently irreconcilable opposition to the interests of the State and of the employers."

I hope (he continued) that the war will cure us of this delusion. For if it does not, if we are not resolved to accept all the consequences of this war unreservedly, in all questions of political life, in the settlement of workmen's rights, in the adjustment of the Prussian electoral system, and in the adjustment of the Diet altogether . . . then we should be moving towards internal disorders the extent of which no man can measure. . . . Woe to the statesman who does not recognise the signs of the times.

Ten days later the Kaiser revealed the scope of the "unreserved" reforms, foreshadowed by his Chancellor, in a rescript of which the essential parts were as follows:

It falls to you, as the responsible Chancellor of the German Empire and the First Minister of my Government in Prussia, to assist in obtaining the fulfilment of the demands of this hour by the right means and at the right time, and in this spirit to shape our political life in order to make room for the free and willing co-operation of all members of our people. The principles which you have developed in this respect have, as you know, my approval. I feel conscious of remaining thus on the path taken by my grandfather, the founder of the Empire, who as King of Prussia with military organisation, and as German Emperor with social reform, typically fulfilled his monarchical obligations, thereby creating conditions by means of which the German people, in united and wrathful perseverance, will overcome these sanguinary times. The maintenance of the fighting force as a real people's army, and the promotion of the social welfare of the people in all its classes, have been my aim from the beginning of my reign.

While millions of our fellow-countrymen are in the field

the conflict of opinion behind the front, which is unavoidable in such a far-reaching change of the Constitution, must be postponed in the highest interests of the Fatherland, until the time of the homecoming of our warriors. . . .

The rescript then defined the "far-reaching change" as "a reform of the Prussian Diet" by the abolition of the class-franchise and the institution of direct and secret election for the Lower House and by the admission into the Upper House "in a more extensive and more proportionate manner than hitherto, men from the various classes and callings of the people who are respected by their fellow-citizens." These reforms were described as "the liberation of our entire inner political life."

I act (the rescript concluded) according to the traditions of my great forefathers when, in strengthening the important positions of our firmly-constructed storm-proof Constitution, I show to my loyal, brave, proficient, and highly developed people the confidence which it deserves. I charge you to make this edict known forthwith.

In form and content this document is less a promise of self-government for Prussia in the future than a reminder of the strength of Prussian absolutism in the present. It reminds us of the grotesquely out-of-date three-class system for the indirect election on a property basis of the Lower House of the Prussian Diet, a system so contrived that "the largest tax-payers—that is, the richest men, who are, of course, comparatively few in number—choose as many electors as the great mass of labourers." * It reminds us, too, of the unrep-

* A. Lawrence Lowell, *Governments and Parties in Continental Europe,* vol. i., p. 305.

resentative character of the Upper House, of whose members, appointed by the King at will, "more than one third are hereditary nobles possessing large estates, while another third are nominated by the landowners, so that the House is really controlled by the landed gentry." * And, above all, it reminds us that, despite its oligarchic composition, the Diet possesses no substantial power even over its own destiny. Its reform, its very existence, is a matter for the King's decision. It was created in 1849 by a constitution, not agreed upon with the consent of the people, but "conceded" to them by the King. And it is now again the King who commands his Chief Minister to submit proposals for its reform to *him*, the principles on which such proposals are to rest having already obtained *his* approval. The whole policy, indeed, is *his*, inspired, as he repeatedly declares, by the "traditions of his great forefathers." There could indeed be no more direct denial of the first principles of self-government nor more uncompromising assertion of the absolute sovereignty of the Crown than the royal mandate which is to inaugurate "the liberation" of Prussia's "entire political life."

It is worth while to look more closely at the power actually wielded by the Prussian Crown. In the rescript of January 4, 1882, the King insisted "on his right to direct personally the politics of his Government"; and government in Prussia is still the "personal" government of the King. The administration is carried on by ministers, appointed and instructed by him, and responsible to him alone. Over their actions

* A. Lawrence Lowell, *Governments and Parties in Continental Europe*, vol. i., p. 302.

the Diet has no effective control. Legislation must receive the King's consent and is usually initiated by his ministers. The Diet has the right to veto bills; but money-bills are the only bills whose rejection could bring the Government to a standstill; and more than once in Bismarck's time when the Diet refused to vote appropriations the Government continued to raise and spend money without its consent. It is, in fact, laid down by most Prussian constitutional jurists that the Diet, having no power by itself to repeal laws, has no right to make them inoperative by refusing funds for their maintenance and that in the event of such refusal the King is entitled to make the requisite expenditures. To overcome opposition, moreover, the King can at any time close the session of the Diet or dissolve the Lower House: and it has frequently happened that, the elections having proved unfavourable, the King has dissolved a new Diet before it met.*

Scarcely less absolute is the power of the Prussian Crown within the German Empire; for the German Emperor must always be the King of Prussia and the Imperial Constitution only departs from the Prussian pattern where the exigencies of a federal system require it. The Lower House of the Imperial Legislature—the Reichstag—is indeed elected on a basis of universal suffrage; † but it has no more real control over administration or legislation than the Prussian Diet. The

* See A. Lawrence Lowell, op. cit., vol. i., pp. 298-299.

† Universal suffrage was the "blackmail to the opposition" paid by Bismarck during the Austrian war. His famous confession on this point has a direct bearing on the present programme of reform in Prussia. See his *Reflections and Reminiscences*, vol. ii., p. 64.

Imperial Chancellor has hitherto coincided with the Prussian Chief Minister; and the holder of those two offices is as completely responsible to the Crown—and to no other authority whatever—in the one case as in the other. The Reichstag's control over finance is limited like the Diet's; and the same theory is upheld as to "necessary" expenditure.

But the backbone of Prussian absolutism, whether in Prussia or in all Germany, lies in its military power. The law of the Imperial Constitution on the question is as follows:

The navy of the Empire is a unitary one under the supreme command of the Kaiser. The organisation and composition of it shall be the duty of the Kaiser, who appoints the officers and officials of the navy, and to whom they, together with the crews, take an oath of obedience. (Art. 53.)

The total land force of the Empire shall constitute a uniform army which in peace and in war is under the command of the Kaiser. (Art. 63.) *

All German troops are bound to render unconditional obedience to the commands of the Kaiser. This obligation is to be included in the military oath.

The chief commanding officers of a contingent, as well as all officers who command troops of more than one contingent, and all commandants of fortresses, shall be appointed by the Kaiser. The officers appointed by him shall take the military oath to him. The appointment of generals and of officers performing the duties of generals within a contingent is made dependent in each case upon the consent of the Kaiser. (Art. 64.)

* By the treaty of November 23, 1870, the Bavarian army is to be under the command of the King of Bavaria in peace, but it is to come under the Kaiser's command when mobilisation begins.

Further, the Kaiser has the right to order mobilisation, including the calling out of the reserves and the *Landsturm* (Art. 63, Clause 4), and, "if in any part of the federal territory the public safety is threatened" —it is for him to decide whether this condition is fulfilled—to proclaim a state of siege, *Kriegzustand* (Art. 68), in which event martial law comes into force, the civil authorities become everywhere subordinate to the military commanders, and the orders of the latter are to be executed without it being permissible to raise the question of their legality. In other words, on the outbreak of war or of any revolutionary movement which in his opinion threatens the public safety, the Kaiser frankly assumes the absolute military dictatorship which at other times is more or less concealed beneath scraps of constitutional paper.

There lies the strength of Prussian absolutism. The most powerful military force the world has ever known is dedicated to the service not of a people but of a single man; and for the use he may choose to make of it that man is answerable to no authority on earth. The stress which the present Kaiser has laid on the personal allegiance of his soldiers to himself has been strictly in accordance with the practice of his "great forefathers." It has naturally figured in his innumerable speeches to his troops, never more significantly, perhaps, than on that famous occasion on which he told a body of recruits that, if he bade them shoot their fathers and brothers, they must obey him. And if rumours from neutral countries are true, the command to fire on civilians in the streets of German towns has been more than once obeyed in the course of the war.

In face of such realities the Kaiser's promise of reform seems almost ludicrous in its insufficiency. No wonder that a Minority Socialist openly declares his description of the army as "a real people's army" to be "a great untruth." * No wonder that Herr Harden, the free-lance of Prussian journalism, mocks at the rescript and calls for a real political advance. It was at once manifest, moreover, that the wider question of imperial politics would be very little affected by such tinkering with the Prussian Constitution; and the fundamental question of ministerial responsibility has already been raised in the Constitution Committee of the Reichstag. † On the occasion, finally, of the Chancellor's statement on May 15, Herr Lebedour, the leader of the extreme Left, openly declared for a Republic; and even Herr Scheidemann, the chief of the Majority Socialists, hitherto so loyal to the Government, referred amid a storm of angry protests to the possibility of revolution. ‡

* Herr Cohn in the Reichstag. *Times,* May 8, 1917.

† Proposals submitted to the Constitution Committee of the Reichstag by the Centre, the Progressive People's Party and the National Liberals (*Times,* May 5, 1917). Herr Dernburg's remarkable speech at Breslau on April 29 (reported in the *Daily Chronicle,* May 1, 1917) in which he pleaded for parliamentary government, should not be overlooked, but its significance must be estimated in the light of the following facts: (1) that Herr Dernburg belongs to the Prussian governing class, and served as Colonial Secretary under Prince Bülow; (2) that he spoke just before May 1; (3) that his demands were for the future. "If we wish for parliamentary government," he said, "we must develop necessary strength for it."

‡ Herr Scheidemann prophesied a revolution, *if* the Allies should renounce all annexations and "the German Government were then to desire to continue the war for conquest-aims." Later in the debate he explained that this condition could not be realised because no Government could "ever come into power which could

But against those who are bold enough to confess themselves unsatisfied are ranged the solid forces of reaction. The excuse given in the royal rescript for postponing the introduction even of the modest Prussian programme till after the war was the "unavoidable conflict of opinion" it would provoke; and the Chancellor confessed that it "would undoubtedly lead to bitter struggles." Indeed the Prussian Conservatives have already asserted their vehement antagonism to the proposed reforms; and that the monarch and his army should be absolutely free from parliamentary interference is a dogma they will never disavow. And they can still, it seems, rely not only on the dumb obedience of the rank and file of the army but also on the general acquiescence of the civil population in the dominance of militarism. The appeal to "blood and iron" is still stronger than "majority resolutions"; and a Prussian War Minister can still disarm and suppress popular agitation by invoking the popularity, or at least the intimidating prestige, of the man who is recognised as the embodiment of Prussianism unregenerate and inflexible. "Who dares," asked General Gröner in his manifesto to the munition workers a few days before the First of May, "who dares to defy Marshal von Hindenburg's call? . . . Who dares to refuse work when Marshal von Hindenburg demands it?" And similarly the Chancellor himself, while he offers his pinchbeck charter of liberty with one hand, rattles the sword of military despotism with the other. On May 15 he refused, as has been noted, to satisfy the Social-

be so perfectly stupid. I do not regard that as possible—not even if the Government were formed of Pan-Germans."

ists' demand for a definite statement of the Government's war-aims in the West. He pretended, indeed, to be pursuing a middle path between the wishes of the Left and of the Right; but the one clear clue he gave to the general tenour of his policy disclosed to all the world which side he really stood on. "About our war-aims," he said, amid loud applause, "I am in full harmony with the Supreme Army Command." Of course he is. The Supreme Army Command is the Kaiser, by whose appointment and with whose consent Hindenburg is working out his plans; and Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg retains office just so long as he remains in "harmony" with his imperial master. But his flash of candour, obvious as the truism it expressed may seem to be, was by no means purposeless. It was more than a mere repudiation of parliamentary control; it was an appeal for sympathy and unity to all those members of the Reichstag who shrink from revolutionary ideas and still cleave in their hearts to the existing régime, an appeal to the natural instincts of conservatism and to the great militarist tradition of the Prussian monarchy.

As long as such appeals can be made and made effectively, absolutism has little to fear from within the German frontier. Neither the Kaiser nor his generals nor his bureaucrats need submit to popular control as long as they can count on the obedience of the army and the mingled pride and submissiveness with which the people still regard the whole fabric of Prussian militarism. But we may perhaps begin to wonder how long their present security will last. All the world over the spirit of freedom is awake. Can Central Europe alone remain immune from its swift contagion, unshaken by

a passion so universal in its power over men? Since the Russian Revolution and the uprising of America one thing at least, which seemed probable before, seems certain now. Prussian autocracy cannot survive an unquestionable defeat of Prussian arms. Then indeed, if not before, the spell of the old tradition will be broken, the meshes of absolutism cut away, and the conscience of the German people free at last to return to the despised and rejected ideals of 1848.

VI. A New Birth of Freedom.

THE events of the last few months have thus reillumined the fundamental issue of the war; and, if the spirit with which the Allies entered on their task in 1914 had begun to lose something of its force and freshness under the long strain, it is now stronger and more resolute than ever. The emancipation of Russia, the intervention of the United States, and the first stirrings of popular unrest in Germany have widened the horizon of the war and revealed the full scope of the promise which victory will offer to the world. Never before has so great a part of civilised mankind united itself to attain a single end; never before has so great a hope for all humanity depended on a single decision. The common life of the world has been always overshadowed by the irreconcilable antagonism between despotism and liberty; on that issue, directly or indirectly, most of the wars between its peoples have been fought. But the present war stands out from all its predecessors. It is not only the greatest: if it ends

as we mean to end it, it should also be the last. For absolutism in Europe would in that case have received its death-blow. It could never return to Russia; it could not long endure in Central Europe.

No one can yet reckon the full measure of the gain which may thus be won for the world. It is idle to dream of a millennium; in the future as in the past there will still be incompatibilities, misunderstandings, disputes, between States and nations; but, when absolutism is extinct in Europe, the very basis of inter-State relations will be changed. Yesterday the world was divided into two great camps. Life within each was clouded by the prospect of an inevitable war. Foreign policy was primarily a problem of balancing antagonistic forces with the purpose on the one side of facilitating, on the other of preventing, Armageddon. To the needs of such a foreign policy, domestic policy was deliberately subordinated and perverted in the one camp; and in the other, for the same reason, its scope was limited, its highest hopes postponed. In all the leading States of the Old World the welfare of the peoples was being more and more cramped and hindered in order to provide the means for their mutual destruction; and the New World was destined to discover, when at the last the open conflict came, that it neither could nor would remain outside the circle of strife and waste. And all this was happening yesterday because despotism was in nature bound to fight with liberty, to strive always to enlarge its power, and so to keep the peoples of the modern world, as far as their mutual relations were concerned, chained to the old despairing philosophy of "the struggle for existence." But to-

morrow, it may be, they will be free at last to unleash the better forces of human nature and to profess without uneasy reservations a nobler and more Christian creed; free to apply to their common life the principles of fellowship and co-operation rather than those of permanent division and balanced power; free to bring together the democracies of the world, new and old, into a "league of honour"—a league which will strive to found the maintenance of peace and justice, not on a diplomacy which must needs be secret so long as it has to work against the "plotting of inner circles who would plan what they would and render an account to no one," but on the public opinion of free peoples who alone "can hold their purpose and their honour steady to the common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own."

It is because such visions of the future can only be realised by the decisive overthrow of Prussian absolutism that the coming months must be regarded as no less than the most momentous in all history. Never before has so wide an opportunity been offered for the betterment of the world's life; and never before have men been so certainly "the masters of their fate." So great is the time that none of us can hope to be worthy of it; but, if we discern the value of the prize we are striving for, if we figure to ourselves the actual good which its attainment must ultimately bring to the lives of all our fellow men, if we remember that innumerable men and women have suffered and died for liberty in the past without hope or thought of such a triumph for their cause as is now within range of achievement, then at least we shall not flinch from the sacrifices

which still lie in front of us, nor suffer our purpose or our unity to weaken till we have "finished the work we are in."

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